

READING

- 1 Make a list of the differences between your online friends and your real friends.
- 2 Read the article quickly. Were any of your ideas mentioned?

FRIENDSHIP IN THE 21st century



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Scientist Dr Russell Carley is interested in finding out about friendship in the 21st century. He started by trying to answer the question: Can online friends be as good as face-to-face friends?

Surprisingly, he found that the answer is a big YES! A friend is someone who gives you honest advice and support, and, of course, an online friend can do that. Online friends can also be close friends. Our real friends can't be with us 24 hours a day, but the online community never sleeps! When you feel anxious in the middle of the night, there's always

someone who can give you support through a text, a message or just a 'like'. Having online friends is good for your memory, too. There's a lot of information to check every day. When you see an interesting holiday picture, you make a note in your mind to ask your pal about it next time they're online, or when you're together in person.

Also, you can find friends who have the same interests as you more easily. If you're interested in Japanese comics, there will be plenty of people who love that too. For most of us, the online community provides support, it builds our confidence, and we feel loved.

So, if online friends are so good, do we need real friends? Interestingly, Dr Carley's research suggests that we do. As he points out, with your real friends, you are in the same physical space; you create memories together as you experience and enjoy doing things with each other. You have to be more responsible with your real friends, as you can't just 'unfriend' them if you disagree with them!

Dr Carley explains the science. 'When you are with your friends, you get hugs and high fives. Hugging is good for us because our body produces a chemical called oxytocin that makes us feel good and we also feel trust and love. Chatting to your best pals, you copy their words and gestures. When they smile, you smile too! So, in conclusion, both real friends and online friends are great – they just help us in different ways.'



NEXT WEEK: Are you good at staying in touch with your friends?

3 Read the article again. Answer the questions.

- 1 How can an online friend support you at night?
- 2 How do online friends help your memory?
- 3 What happens when you hug a friend?
- 4 What happens when you talk to people face-to-face?
- 5 According to the article, which are best for you: online or face-to-face friends? Why?

4 Match the highlighted words in the article to the meanings.

- 1 friend
- 2 movements of your hands, arm or head to show a feeling
- 3 remove someone from your social media account
- 4 when you put your arms around someone because you like them
- 5 getting more information about something



TALKING POINTS

Do you think you will have the same online friends in five years' time? Why? / Why not?

Do you think you will have the same real friends in five years' time? Why? / Why not?

What are the disadvantages of having online friends?